

(Washington, D.C.) - After days of contentious debate that jeopardized passage of the bill, the US House of Representatives today passed the FY '08 Homeland Security Appropriations bill with provisions incorporated by Congressman Ciro D. Rodriguez (TX-23) designed to help border communities address border security.

"As the only member of the Appropriations Committee from the Texas-Mexico border, I am uniquely able to advocate for our border communities and local law enforcement in the Homeland Security Appropriations bill," said Congressman Rodriguez. "I have worked very closely with Chairman Price and we were successful in including language that requires community input for proposed fencing and the restoration of \$15 million in grants for local law enforcement along the border to address the growing problem of drug smuggling and human trafficking."

"Congressman Rodriguez was instrumental in bringing the voice and perspective of border communities to the Appropriations Homeland Security Subcommittee," said Chairman David E. Price. "His diligence has ensured that DHS consults with communities and that needed resources are given to border law enforcement."

The full Homeland Security appropriations funding bill provides \$36.3 billion to support federal agencies engaged in ensuring homeland security, including Customs and Border Patrol (CBP), and Immigration Customs Enforcement (ICE). The Rodriguez language specifically authorizes \$15 million in DHS grants through the "Operation Stonegarden" program to border communities for cracking down on drug smuggling and human trafficking. These grants are not for local enforcement of Federal immigration law. Congressman Rodriguez also included language that requires DHS to consult with state and local communities before any funds are expended on tactical fencing or infrastructure, protecting the rights of local landowners.

"To achieve strong and smart border control we need to support our border law enforcement and incorporate the local expertise of our border communities," said Congressman Rodriguez.

Homeland Security FY '08 Bill highlights:

- Rodriguez language: \$15 million for "Operation Stonegarden" to assist border communities with anti-drug smuggling and human trafficking efforts. President Bush had zeroed out this program for FY '08;
- Rodriguez language: Requires DHS to formally consult with state and local communities to solicit their advice and support before spending funds on tactical fencing or infrastructure;
- \$36.3 billion in DHS funding in overall bill -- 5% above the President's request;
- 3,000 additional Border Patrol agents.

Congressman Rodriguez serves on the Committee on Appropriations Subcommittee on Homeland Security.